

Native American Business Education a Focus

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Conference to be Held in Billings September 5-6

First Interstate Bank Foundation, the Montana Department of Commerce and the Montana Indian Business Alliance are sponsoring *Indianpreneur, a Native American Journey into Business*, intended to train instructors to complete business training in communities with a large Indian presence. “Economic and business development is a cornerstone to addressing all of the other challenges local communities face. Helping someone to start-up and grow a business blazes a successful path that others can follow,” Governor Brian Schweitzer said. “I am especially grateful to see the leadership come from Indian communities as we join together to advance this important agenda.”

Curriculum Created by Leaders in Business Development

Tony Preite, Director of the Montana Department of Commerce explained that growing the economy in Indian Country has an impact on the whole Montana economy. “What I like about this program and others I am seeing springing out of Indian communities, is that the focus is on the resources that are right there at the local level. You hear people talk about untapped natural resources...well let me tell you there is wonderful untapped human potential just waiting to get started,” Preite said.

The intense curriculum for *Indianpreneurs* was developed by national leaders from the American Indian community. Developers say they focused on the strong characteristics of Indian culture and hope to illustrate how they can be applied in the real business world. Areas of focus are marketing, operations and finances. Philip Belangie, who manages the program for the Montana Department of Commerce, explained that the event in Billings is intended to be a *train the trainers* session, and that the group hopes the benefits will be much greater than having prospective entrepreneurs all come to one event. “This material was created by Indian peoples for Indian peoples, and what we have seen thus far is a very positive reaction to how the information is presented,” Belangie said.

For more information please contact Philip Belangie at (406) 721-3663.